

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04801 281452Z
ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SYE-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /006 W
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O 281408Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE IMMEDIATE 4157

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4801

SY CHANNEL

DEPARTMENT FOR SY/CC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC,
SUBJECT: SECRETARY VANCE TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST/ INTELLIGENCE
ESTIMATE

1. DAMASCUS HAS BEEN ROCKED BY TWO MAJOR CAR BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN THE PAST MONTH. THE FIRST OCCURRED ON JULY 4, 1977, ACROSS FROM AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS, INJURING TWELVE PEOPLE AND KILLING ONE. THE SECON EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE ON JULY 10 AT 1430 HOURS (LOCAL) NEAR THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. DAMASCUS PRESS REPORTED FIFTY-FIVE KILLED AND WOUNDED. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT BOTH EXPLOSION WERE AIMED AT EMBARRASSING THE SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES AND WERE PERPETRATED BY OPPONENTS OF ASSAD REGIME.

2. IN THE PAST MOST BOMB EXPLOSIONS OCCURRED AT TIMES AND PLACES AWAY FROM LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE. HOWEVER, ABOVE EXPLOSIONS SEEM TO INDICATE THAT PERPETRATORS ARE MORE VIOLENTLY MOTIVATED TO THEIR COUSE THAN THOS RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OTHER BOMBINGS LAST SUMMER. MOREOVER, PRESENT PERPETRATORS ARE STILL BELIEVED TO BE AT LARGE, THERBY ADDING TO THE FRUSTRATION OF THE SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES AND BUILDING A TENSE SECURITY CLIMATE IN DAMASCUS.

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3. RSO MET JULY 27 WITH GENERAL MOHAMMED EL KHOULI, DESIGNATED SYRIAN REPRESENTATIVE NAMED BY PRESIDENT ASSAD TO COORDINATE ALL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS APPROPRIATE TO THE VISIT OF SECRETARY VANCE TO DAMASCUS. EL KHOULI IS CHIEF AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE, ASSAD'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE ON LEBANESE QUADRAPARTITE COMMITTEE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDIN-

ATING THE PERSONAL PROTECTION OF PRESIDENT ASSAD. EL KHOULI ADVISED THAT THERE ARE NO KNOWN THREATS AGAINST THE SECRETARY, AND EVERY POSSIBLE SECURITY PRECAUTION WILL BE TAKEN TO INSURE SAFETY OF THE SECRETARY AND THAT OF THE OFFICIAL PARTY. IN A DISCUSSION OF THE RECENT BOMBINGS IN DAMASCUS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A BOMB ATTEMPT DIRECTED AGAINST THE SECRETARY OR PARTY IN AN ACT TO KILL/INJURE, OR, FOR WH MATTER, EMBARASS THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT, EL KHOULI REMARKED THAT ALL OF THE RECENT BOMBINGS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AGAINST THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AND NOT AGAINST AMERICANS, AND IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT THIS WILL CHANGE. AS A MEANS OF DISSUADING SUCH ATTEMPTS, EL KHOULI POINTED OUT THE TIGHT SECURITY MEASURES PRESENTLY IN EFFECT AT THE DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS THAT WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID ANY INCIDENTS EITHER DIRECTED AGAINST THE SECRETARY OR THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT.

4. RSO HAS LIAISON CONTACT WITH EL KHOULI'S OFFICE AND HAS BEEN ASSURED THAT ANY HARMFUL OR POTENTIALLY HARMFUL PLANS TO EITHER INJURE, EMBARASS OR DISTURB THE VISIT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE WILL BE MADE KNOWN IMMEDIATELY.

5. OTHER ASPECTS OF LOCAL POLITICAL CLIMATE SHOULD NOT AFFECT VISIT. LOCAL PARLIMENTARY ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 1 BUT PUBLIC INTEREST HAS BEEN MINIMAL AND WE DO NOT EXPECT INCIDENTS. REGARDING LEBANON, SYRIA, PRESIDENT SARKIS
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AND PLO ARE CURRENTLY NEGOTIATING NEW SCHEME TO APPLY CAIRO ACCORDS. WHILE PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS CAN BE EXPECTED TO OPPOSE THIS EFFORT TO PLACE FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON TYIR FREEDOM OF ACTION, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THEY WILL CONNECT SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THIS ISSUE.

MURPHY

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NNN

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